DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 034 454 48 FL 001 529

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TITLE Independent Evaluation of the Language Institute Program for the Summer of 1959.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 30 Nov 59
NOTE 8p.; Report taken from Bulletin on the National Defense Education Act, Title VI, No. 8

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.50
DESCRIPTORS *Audiolingual Methods, Audiolingual Skills, Curriculum Design, Educational Strategies, Evaluation, Evaluation Methods, Institutes (Training Programs), Institute Type Courses, Instructional Improvement, Instructional Innovation, *Language Instruction, National Programs, *Program Evaluation, *Secondary School Teachers, Second Language Learning, *Summer Institutes, Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS National Defense Education Act, NDEA

ABSTRACT

This independent evaluation, prepared for the United States Office of Education, of the first National Defense Education Act Summer Institutes for elementary and secondary school teachers of foreign languages describes general objectives of National Defense Education Act Institutes and procedures for evaluation. Mention is made of experimentation and innovation including discussion of a required Russian or Japanese "shock course" for teachers. Noting the general success of the 12 Institutes, the report emphasizes three areas for improvement: (1) additional materials should be developed concerning audio-lingual skills, (2) courses and learning experiences should be of a direct and participatory nature, and (3) curriculum design should be integrated whenever possible. The most successful areas of work are judged to be: (1) practical application of the target language, (2) use of demonstration classes involving new methods and techniques, (3) practice teaching, (4) group discussion, and (5) individual criticism. Discussion of the harm done to the program by traditional concepts of "graduate credit" and "course requirement" is noted. For the report of the 1960 Institutes see FL 001 528. (RL)

ED034454

Bulletin on the National Defense Education Act - Public Law 85-864

Title VI: No. 8

November 30, 1959

TO : All Persons Interested in Language Institutes

FROM : Kenneth W. Mildenberger, Acting Chief
Language Development Section
U. S. Office of Education

SUBJECT: Independent Evaluation of the Language Institute Program for the Summer of 1959

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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FL001529

In the summer of 1959, twelve Institutes for elementary and secondary school teachers of modern foreign languages were conducted under authorization of Section 611 in the National Defense Education Act. Sponsoring institutions were Colgate University, University of Colorado, University of Georgia, Hollins College, Louisiana State University, University of Maine, University of Michigan, University of Missouri, San Francisco State College, University of South Dakota, University of Texas, and University of Washington. Three procedures were followed in order to evaluate this program and prepare for a more effective program in 1960. First, every Institute was visited by at least one member of the Language Development staff. Second, the faculty and students at each Institute collaborated in a self-evaluation, submitted to the Chief of Language Development in an Institute director's report. And finally, a contract was made with Middlebury College to conduct, under Dr. Stephen A. Freeman (Vice President, and Director of the Middlebury Summer Language Schools), an independent, unhindered field survey of the Institutes. The following formal report has been prepared by Dr. Freeman, based upon detailed studies of each Institute.

GENERAL REPORT: 1959 SUMMER LANGUAGE INSTITUTES

At the request of the United States Office of Education, a team of independent observers was created to visit the twelve NDEA Language Institutes during the summer of 1959, and to make an objective report on the success of the Institutes, their strengths, and their weaknesses. Although essentially it was to be an evaluation, the spirit was less that of an inspection than of a desire to see how certain Institutes met and solved their problems, overcame inherent difficulties, and set up patterns of procedure which would be helpful for the Institutes which are now being planned for 1960.

The team of observers was composed of the following: Miss Jeannette Atkins of the Westport (Connecticut) Public Schools, Professor Arthur H. Beattie of the University of Arizona, Professor Agnes M. Brady of the University of Kansas, Professor William T. Carter of Virginia State College, Miss Patricia O'Connor of Brown University, Professor J. Alan Pfeffer of the University of Buffalo, Professor W. Freeman Twaddell of Brown University, Professor George B. Watts of Davidson College; with Miss Mary P. Thompson of the Glastonbury (Connecticut) Public Schools as Assistant Director, and Professor Stephen A. Freeman of Middlebury College as Director. Different pairs of these observers made visits to each Institute at the beginning and at the end of the session, and the whole team held two general conferences.

These observers are agreed that the operation of the twelve Language Institutes of 1959 was successful; and that, judged overall, they accomplished the purpose for which they were established. The observers were gratified and often inspired by the eagerness and the sincerity of the participants. They were chosen in general from the middle range of applicants as regards preparation. The very well prepared teachers of foreign languages and the unusually poorly prepared teachers were generally not accepted. Although there was still a considerable variation in level of preparation, the participants were able to profit by the instruction given. At the same time, they realized keenly how inadequate was their preparation to do the best teaching, and they were heartwarming in their desire to improve. There were very few if any students in the Institutes who were primarily interested in the stipend received. The public schools of the country will inevitably feel the impact of the experiences and stimulus gained by these teachers during the past summer. Almost without exception, the participants have returned to their schools with a new approach to classroom procedures, a greater confidence in their own control of the foreign language, and a sizeable equipment of information, teaching materials, even tapes and exercises. All this leads to the conclusion that the operation of 1959 justifies a considerable amplification of the Institute program in the summer of 1960.

The twelve Institutes of 1959 must be to a very large degree considered and judged as a pilot project, or even as a rather bold experiment. Nine hundred twenty-five teachers were given an opportunity at Government expense to study for six or eight weeks in a program which stated that its objectives were "to increase the audio-lingual competence of teachers of modern foreign languages, and to introduce them to new teaching methods and techniques." These Institutes therefore had a new mandate and they were quite different in many ways from the usual summer school. The philosophy and the organization of the Institutes were unlike anything which many of the participants, and even some of the faculty members, had ever met before. The Institutes were intentionally scattered geographically and some were located in areas where nothing of the sort had existed

before. It was to be expected that they would achieve varying degrees of success. Some were remarkably successful; others were very effective in certain aspects but less in others. Some interpreted their objectives differently and did not accomplish all that had been hoped.

The Institutes were also severely handicapped this past summer by late authorization. Four of them were authorized during the winter, but the other eight were not authorized until late May, when a supplemental appropriation became available. It became evident that even those first authorized did not have too much time to prepare their program, even when, in some cases, the Director was released to spend full time on it during the second semester. The Institutes which could not be authorized until May were in great difficulty. Their faculties in some cases received no contract until their arrival on the campus. Their laboratories and teaching materials were not ready. Buildings and other physical facilities could not be reserved in advance and were lost to other uses. Multiple applications and multiple acceptances among the Institutes left the composition of the student body in doubt until the last moment. Fortunately, most of these difficulties were related to the pilot nature of a first summer and should not happen again in the summer of 1960.

Experimentation was encouraged in the Institutes. The imagination and ingenuity of many of the Directors suggested a number of new ideas for procedures which can be used to great advantage next summer. Three Institutes taught a new language, either Russian or Japanese, as a "shock" procedure, in order to give the participants an experience in learning a new language from the point of view of the pupil and also to illustrate the new methods of teaching a modern language. One Institute organized for each participant an hour of conversation daily with one of a number of native speakers. Another Institute had a program of foreign language broadcasts over loud-speakers wired into each dormitory room. Other Institutes arranged half-hour discussion groups before dinner in order to get the table conversation going. Interesting systems of correlation were worked out between the civilization courses and the material for language practice or controlled conversation. One Institute insisted that each participant bring his own tape recorder so that he could construct and record exercises of pattern practice and other materials for use in his own school classes. These and many other new devices reflect the ferment of new ideas which existed in most of the Institutes this summer.

The team of observers was commissioned specifically to note the lessons to be learned from the operation of 1959 and the improvements that can and should be made in the session of 1960. Its report to the Office of Education deals with a number of major areas of concern. It became evident that, as between the two parts of the Institutes' stated objectives, the greater need and the primary desire of the participants was for the upgrading of their own

competence in the foreign language, particularly the spoken language. The participants realized very clearly that no amount of instruction in new methods and techniques, in laboratory, or in linguistics, can be of any avail unless the teacher has a good knowledge of the foreign language he is teaching. The students responded eagerly to all possible situations involving oral practice, in controlled or informal conversation groups, laboratory listening, pattern practice at the level of their own competence; and they sought eagerly for extra-curricular opportunities in the use of the foreign language. Some Institutes were superlative in their program for instruction in the foreign language; a few tended to forget this basic premise. Occasionally, oral practice stressed fluency without the proper amount of correction and remedial work, so that some participants were drilling themselves in errors. A greater amount of remedial diagnosis of the oral ability of each participant seemed to be necessary. With a longer period of time for preparation, it should also be possible for the Institutes to prepare more materials for use by the participants in improving their language competence. The supply of these was insufficient this summer.

It is also strongly recommended that every Institute should have a Language House, or separate living quarters for each foreign language group; and that each group should take its meals together. Both in the Language Houses and at the language tables the use of the foreign language should be stressed to the point of the practical exclusion of English. For various reasons this past summer some of the Institutes were unable to have segregated language houses, or were not able to organize separate language tables. This was a serious lack, greatly regretted by the students. In general, the observers noted that when proper opportunities and encouragement were created by the Institute, the participants themselves preferred to use the foreign language outside of classes and even around the campus, sometimes even reprimanding their fellow students for a lapse into English.

A second general conclusion which seems inescapable to the team of observers is that the teaching of new methods and procedures for the language classroom is better done through practical application than through lectures on theory. In general, the courses given this summer in the theory, the history, and the methodology of modern language teaching were not very successful, and were considered an unwise allocation of time by the participants, most of whom had already had many courses of this sort. On the other hand, the practical applications of new methods and techniques, through demonstration classes, practice teaching, group discussion, and individual criticism, were in general most helpful and enthusiastically received by the participants. Even when a demonstration was less than perfect, it was at least a practical implementation of abstract theory, and as such, gave an opportunity for student analysis and discussion in terms of immediate classroom practice.

The observers recommend therefore that in 1960 less emphasis be placed upon theoretical methodology; and more time be devoted to

the observation of demonstrations, an analysis of the actual procedures both by the demonstration teacher himself and from the point of view of theory, and a very considerable opportunity for discussion by the participants. It seems desirable also that the participant should have more opportunity for practice teaching, provided that the student is carefully coached in advance of the practice teaching session, and receives afterward the benefit of individual comment and criticism, as was done in several Institutes. Great care should be taken to make sure that the demonstration classes are completely realistic and practical. Since they are an optimum teaching device, the participants should be required and scheduled to observe the demonstration regularly. There was a tendency in some Institutes for them to discontinue observing the demonstration classes as final examinations approached.

Important areas not covered in the Institutes of 1959 were the study of methods and techniques for teaching language classes in the second, third and fourth years; the transition from oral work to reading and writing; and the correlation between grade school and junior high school.

The teaching of a new language, either Russian or Japanese, as a "shock" demonstration, proved itself to be highly valuable. The only criticism made of this device was that in some cases it demanded a disproportionate amount of time in the students' entire program. The real purpose was not to learn Russian or Japanese, but to observe techniques and attitudes. It is therefore recommended that in 1960 the time devoted to a new language should not exceed two hours a week; that no home work should be assigned; that no academic credits should be given, and that there should be no final examination.

The teaching of foreign languages at the grade school level was treated in four Institutes out of the twelve this past summer. In view of the rapid expansion of the FLES movement it seems evident that there should be more opportunities offered for FLES teachers in 1960. Even if only the same proportion of attention were maintained next summer, there should be nine or ten FLES sections among the thirty-five.

A third major lesson which the observers learned in their visits this summer is that the most successful Institutes were distinguished by a high degree of coordination among all the parts of the instructional program. It was quite evident that participants considered their summer's work a unit, focused upon the two aspects of making themselves better language teachers. To achieve this purpose, they did not wish to enroll for four or five unrelated courses. They wished an integrated program, in which every part had some direct bearing upon every other part, and in which the practical correlation was clear. Some of the best programs observed were those in which the civilization or culture course served as the

basis and source for a large part of the activity of the day. It might be given as a half-hour lecture early in the morning. A variety of materials were then derived from it. Students used these materials on tape for listening practice in the laboratory. They served as discussion topics either in a follow-up of the culture class or in the section of controlled conversation. They became the source of corrective pronunciation exercises in connection with the phonetics class or in the lab; and written work based upon the cultural readings was corrected in the language practice class. The correlation between the demonstration class, practice teaching, and discussion of methods and techniques, has already been described above.

In many of the Institutes, this integration of the entire summer's program was symbolized by the fact that only one final grade was given and a single block of credits assigned without division, for the entire session. It also appeared to be true that there was greater cohesion, and greater student satisfaction, when all students took the same basic or "core" program, with variations depending only upon the language and the level of preparation; rather than to allow each participant a free choice in a number of elective courses.

Such coordination cannot be achieved without careful planning. The preliminary briefing week which was held in most of the Institutes gave an opportunity to all members of the faculty to know what each colleague was doing, and with what materials, and to share helpful information. Frequent faculty meetings, even regularly once a week, were also found useful as a continuing check on this coordination of the entire program. It is recommended as desirable that all Institutes next summer adopt the integrated point of view and implement it as completely as possible.

With a few conspicuous exceptions, the courses in descriptive or general linguistics were not very successful. Only a few of the professional technical linguists who gave courses this summer had had teacher-training experience and were able to make the practical applications to the foreign language at the participants' level, and to the procedures of the secondary school class. In the few cases where such practical applications were made, the participants gradually dropped their hostility to the new ideas and recognized the contribution which linguistics can make to language teaching. It is considered desirable that the attempt be made again in 1960, but competent linguists with foreign language classroom experience are in very short supply and it appears unlikely that the necessary number will be found.

The observers were also forced to the conclusion that it is essential that the Language Institutes henceforth be completely divorced from the idea of graduate credit. Much harm was done this past summer by the stress that was placed upon graduate credit. A few of the Institutes became in reality "little graduate schools," and insisted upon the participants enrolling for courses which fitted the usual

notion of graduate work. In some Institutes, students took graduate-credit courses that they were not interested in; and did not profit by other courses which they liked and needed because no graduate credit was offered.

There was also far too much stress upon the testing program, with extraneous examinations like the Graduate Record Examination and the CEEP exams being given in addition to placement tests and final examinations. Graduate school requirements in some of the Universities added further complexities. Students were turned aside from their real purpose of improving their language competence, toward the search for credit. Students stopped observing the demonstration classes, and the valuable habit of auditing was reduced to a minimum, because of the fear of final examinations and the desire for graduate credit. Grading systems were confused; students were confronted with unexpected examinations, faculty members were not sure whether they should grade on the basis of progress or achievement. A few of the Institutes required too heavy a schedule, either in terms of class hours or in terms of required outside work. Physical exhaustion, added to the fear of final examinations, reduced student morale to a low ebb in the last week of a few Institutes. This can all be readily avoided in 1960 by separating the Institute program completely from all idea of graduate work, and by concentrating the students' efforts upon the upgrading of language competence and on the learning of new methods. The students themselves generally would prefer this, the observers noted.

It is planned to amplify the Language Institute program greatly in the summer of 1960. The tentative figure of thirty-five Institutes has been announced. Observation of the situation this past summer leads to the recommendation of much caution in the planning for 1960. We rejoice that funds seem to be available for so large a development. There will be plenty of applicants. It is not so certain that there will be plenty of well-qualified people to staff the Institutes. There may not be thirty-five men with the ideal qualifications for the post of Director, who can be relieved of other duties full-time for the second semester of the current year. There was a serious shortage of laboratory technicians this past summer. Some competitive bidding went on for technicians, linguists, and demonstration class teachers. It is to be hoped that a larger proportion of well-qualified secondary school and grade school teachers will be used in the central councils of the Institutes next summer. Many of the college or university teachers on the faculty had insufficient understanding of the needs of secondary school or grade school teachers. Persons with good experience at the secondary school level could also be used in administrative positions, particularly as Assistant Directors.

It appears essential that the U. S. Office of Education should exercise some control over the inevitable competition between so many Institutes. There will be multiple applications and multiple acceptances needing control. Some sort of normal scale of salaries

for faculty members and staff needs to be established. We are confident that the authorizations will be announced in time for adequate planning for 1960. All the Directors will wish to profit by the experiences and lessons of the summer of 1959. Will there be enough of the right kind of people available, in order to carry out the specific mandate of increasing audio-lingual competence and of presenting the new teaching methods? No Institute will be better than the staff it secures. It would evidently be better to authorize less than thirty-five Institutes, than to operate any Institute that would disappoint the participants or give them wrong instruction. In the proper staffing lies the principal danger for 1960. In the enthusiasm and the desperate need of thousands of language teachers lies the opportunity.

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